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Great Lakes Wave

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2009 E-Forum A Great Success

By Marybelle Yeazel

The Michigan Library and Historical Center, in Lansing, Michigan was the place to be on August 25, 2009. The ninth annual Electronic Records Forum was co-hosted by NARA-Great Lakes Region-Dayton and the Michigan Library and Historical Center. The Library was a beautiful venue for the forum. The audience was a mix of folks from the Federal sector, state and local governments, and the private sector. Over 100 attendees were on hand to hear the latest news on many topics of interest.

The morning kicked off with welcoming remarks from Sandra Clark, Director, Michigan Historical Center and Joseph Suster, Director, Records Management Program NARA-Great Lakes Region.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Kenneth Thibodeau, NARA's newly appointed Director of the NARA Center for Advanced Systems and Technologies. Dr. Thibodeau had been the Director of the Electronic Records Archives (ERA) since its inception. He provided a very enlightening update on ERA, where it's been, and where it needs to go in the future to ensure that electronic Federal records are available for use by

future generations. One of the highlights of his presentation were the slides and discussion about moving servers with information from the outgoing Bush Administration to their new home in West Virginia.

Joseph Suster spoke after Dr. Thibodeau, and discussed NARA's electronic records scheduling initiative. Galen Wilson, Senior Records Analyst from NARA-Dayton, took the podium from there and talked about flexible scheduling and its potential application to electronic records. Both of these presentations led to questions on scheduling issues including "big-bucket" scheduling and retention bands.

The next presentation was on NARA's E-Records Toolkit and featured a team effort by James Hurst, Archivist, and Marybelle Yeazel, Archives Specialist, from NARA -Dayton. James discussed what the Toolkit is, a bit about who contributes to it, and how to find it. Marybelle then followed and did a brief online demonstration of the Toolkit's search capabilities.



Photo by Anthony Beard

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Upon request, the Great Lakes Region provides customer oriented, problem-solving technical assistance to front-end records and information management problems facing Federal agencies. Your agency and NARA form a partnership to solve records management challenges. Together, we develop a project with a well-defined purpose; tangible products; definite milestones; and a time frame for completion. Projects can last from several days to several months.

For more information about such technical assistance in the Great Lakes Region, please contact: Galen R. Wilson at 937-425-0613/ Galen.Wilson@nara.gov for Federal agencies in Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio or John Stewart at 773-948-9024/ John.Stewart@nara.gov for Federal agencies in Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

The Potential Flu Pandemic and Your Agency's Records

By Joseph Suster

Depending on your sources of information, the Federal Government may suffer from the effects of an H1N1 (swine) flu pandemic during the upcoming months. While no one knows for sure how severe the flu's effect will be on agency operations, what is known is that many Federal agencies, including NARA, will rely on employees "teleworking" or "telecommuting" to continue primary mission activities, if the outbreak is widespread.

For telecommuting to be effective, agencies must ensure that staff have remote access to those electronic record and non-record (reference) materials they would normally use at their regular workplaces. In particular, these include so-called legal

and financial rights records that document and protect the agency's interests and those of the constituencies served by the agency. Does your agency have procedures in place to allow some or most of its employees to work from home or another alternate site in case of an emergency or when social distancing is recommended? If so, has provision been made to make all necessary records, including those that may contain sensitive or confidential information, accessible electronically? Are safeguards in place to preserve and protect such electronic

records when they are created and/or maintained offsite during such an interim period?

These and other questions must be answered before an agency initiates a productive telecommuting program it expects will substitute for employees reporting to work in person. Similar to employees and capital, records are among the most common and important assets any organization has. They need to be available, accounted for, and protected, just like valued employees, during a pandemic or other emergency.



Chicago Federal Executive Board Briefing on Disasters, COOP and Vital Records

By John Stewart

On September 2nd the Chicago Federal Executive Board sponsored a briefing on Disasters, Continuity of Operation Plans (COOP), and Vital Records for agency record managers and emergency coordinators. Great Lakes Region Records Management staff presented a 90-minute briefing that provided the audience with the most current information on the priorities and procedures for complying with FEMA's Federal Continuity Directive 1 (FDC 1) and NARA's vital records and disaster response recommendations.

The presentation incorporated lessons learned from the natural emergency responses occurring since Hurricane Katrina in 2005. These experiences emphasize the importance of an agency analyzing its essential mission functions, and determining strategies for performing the essential activities necessary in order to continue operations during or immediately after an emergency or disaster. One component of a COOP is a vital records program.

The briefing concentrated on the basics of a vital records program. Such a program ensures the continuation of essential functions, and minimizes the long-term effects of a disruptive event by identifying and protecting vital records. Agency management must put in place a plan by assigning roles and responsibilities for vital records within the agency, and providing resources for staff training so they can identify vital records and perform periodic reviews in order to keep the plan current.

Besides identifying essential functions and required information, a vital records program provides protection strategies, including dispersal of information and utilizing appropriate storage facilities. Vital records programs also include taking preventive and mitigation actions.

The attendees reviewed the characteristic features of "emergency operating records", which include records and databases essential to the continued functioning of an agency during and after a disruptive event;

and "legal and financial rights records", which are records critical to carrying out an agency's essential functions and vital to the protection of the legal and financial rights of individuals who are directly affected by that agency's activities.

The instructional material also explored which format is best for vital records and the concepts of "static vital records" that change little or not at all, and "dynamic vital records" that change constantly with circumstances or completed work.

For anyone interested in learning more about vital records plans, contact Joseph Suster, Regional Records Management Program Director, at 773-948-9040 or email Joseph.Suster@nara.gov.

FY 2009 File Closeout

By James Hurst

It's that time again – the end of the fiscal year, which means that those of us with records management responsibilities should close out our files. This yearly procedure applies to operating records in all media (e.g., paper, electronic, photographs, videos), whether maintained at your desk, on your PC, in file cabinets, or in file rooms. Here are the basic steps:

1. Cut off FY 2009 files. Most records series have cutoff instructions described by your agency records schedules. Accumulated records should be broken out as series for eventual disposal or transfer (to a Federal Records Center, to other onsite or off-site storage, or to the National Archives for permanent records of all types). Cutoff dates are September 30 for fiscal year files or December 31 for calendar year files.



2. Set up new files for FY 2010. Create new folders (paper or electronic) for records created from October 1, 2009 forward (for calendar year records, from January 1, 2010 forward).



3. Destroy eligible temporary records that are stored in your office space. Temporary records that have reached the end of their retention periods (as specified in your agency records schedules) must be disposed of. Instructions on how to destroy non-sensitive, classified, and sensitive-but-unclassified information are generally provided by the records schedule or is available from your agency records officer.

4. Transfer eligible records to records storage facilities. Records no longer needed for current business but which are not yet ready for disposal should be transferred to a storage facility, such as a Federal Records Center, a commercial storage facility, or storage provided onsite by your agency. This applies to both temporary and permanent records. For advice on marking boxes and filling out transfer forms, such as the SF 135, you should contact a NARA Federal Records Center or your agency records officer.

5. Transfer eligible permanent records to the National Archives. Records (such as some electronic records) that are eligible for immediate transfer to the National Archives should be transferred according to NARA guidelines. Contact NARA or your agency records officer for advice on this procedure.

6. Print and file electronic records. Because many agencies do not have electronic recordkeeping capability, it is sound practice to print and file (in paper records systems) any records that need to be preserved beyond a prescribed period, such as 120 days.

These records management practices are essential for your agency to meet its business needs. For any questions about files close-outs, contact your agency records officer or your nearest Federal Records Center staff.

Coming to Chicago in 2010!

Regional RACO is an annual one-day conference on Federal records management issues hosted by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Each year NARA picks one of its regional offices to host this event. The Great Lakes Region in Chicago has been chosen for 2010. Stayed tuned for more news on this exciting educational opportunity!

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James Hurst Retires after 32 Years of Federal Service at NARA

By Galen Wilson

Jim was born in Jacksonville, Illinois, and received his undergraduate degree from Bradley University in 1965. He later pursued post-graduate studies at both the University of Illinois and the University of Strasbourg in France. Prior



to coming to the National Archives, he spent eight years teaching French and German at Indiana University, Blackburn College, and the University of Illinois.

He began his NARA career at the Chicago Federal Records Center in 1977 as a "CIDS" (Career Intern Development System) trainee, a program that mentored many current managers throughout NARA. He later transferred to NARA's Dayton office where for many years he was the chief of its Appraisal and Disposition Branch. More recently, he has been an archivist with the Records Management office. Over the years, he has become well known in the Federal community of Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan as a talented workshop instructor.

In more recent years he has enjoyed spending time with two young grandsons, who are poised to occupy a significant portion of Jim's newly expanded free time. NARA-Great Lakes wishes Jim a long, healthy, and happy retirement.



Jim received his Service Certificate from Joseph Suster, RM Director, Great Lakes Region while Galen Wilson and Marybelle Yeazel of the Dayton RM team looked on.